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International Narcotics Control Strategy Report 2007 --  
Volume 1 Drug and Chemical Control

Dominican Republic

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[I](#)I. Summary  
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[1](#)1. The Dominican Republic (DR) is a major transit country for drugs from South America, with cocaine transiting to Europe, and both cocaine and heroin transiting to the United States. During 2006, the DR dramatically increased major seizures of narcotics such as heroin, cocaine and MDMA; continued cooperating in extraditions; increased deportations of criminals; made advances in domestic law enforcement capacity, institution building and interagency networking; and made progress in prosecuting major bank fraud and government corruption cases. In spite of these positive signs however, corruption and weak governmental institutions remained an impediment to controlling the flow of illegal narcotics. The Government of the Dominican Republic (GODR) is a party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention. End summary.

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II. Status of Country  
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[1](#)2. There is no significant cultivation, refining, or manufacturing of illicit drugs in the Dominican Republic. Dominican criminal organizations are involved in international drug trafficking operations, with the country's primary role being a transshipment hub. Interdicted MDMA (ecstasy) was most often being transported from Europe to the United States. Fishing and "go-fast" crews involved in drug trafficking in the Caribbean include Dominican nationals.

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III. Country Actions Against Drugs in 2006  
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[1](#)3. Policy Initiatives. Intelligence-sharing plays an important part in interdiction efforts. The DEA Center for Drug Information (CDI), housed in the DR National Drug Control Directorate (DNCD), served as a clearinghouse for intelligence within the Caribbean. The DNCD, the law enforcement arm responsible for counternarcotics measures, and the National Drug Council (CND), the GODR's policy and planning unit, have adopted a computerized system that tracks seizures of drug-related assets. The GODR continues to struggle to implement anti-money laundering legislation

passed in 2002, although with US assistance, prosecutors will be receiving training on how to deal with cases of money-laundering and other complex crimes. The US is also working in conjunction with GODR prosecutors and law enforcement agencies in conducting joint money-laundering investigations, which is providing on the job training to the GODR counterparts. The GODR created a Financial Analysis Unit which became operational during 2005 but lacked the resources and institutional structure to perform effectively.

The Financial Analysis Unit continues to exist by name, but is not operational due to the lack of resources and institutional structure. The GODR signed the Cooperating Nations Information Exchange System agreement allowing the installation of equipment to track and respond to suspected drug smuggling aircraft headed for the DR.

14. Law Enforcement Efforts. In FY 2006, the DNCD increased its seizure rate and netted a record single seizure of cocaine (2582.3 kilograms) with the cooperation and assistance of the DEA and Department of Homeland Security (DHS), based on intelligence provided by British Counterparts in Jamaica. During FY 2006, overall seizures totaled 5,055 kilograms of cocaine, 236.8 kilograms of heroin, 363,433.6 units of MDMA, and 362.4 kilograms of marijuana. The DNCD made 8,809 drug-related arrests in FY 2006; of these, 8,563 were Dominican nationals and 246 were foreigners. Maritime seizures remain a challenge for the DR, especially drugs hidden in commercial vessels for shipment to the U.S. and/or Europe and drugs arriving by "go-fast" boats from South America. The DNCD and their DEA counterparts concentrated increasingly on investigations leading to the takedown of large criminal organizations.

15. In FY2006, the GODR maintained its counternarcotics and explosive detection canine units at its international airports and major sea ports. Canine units at the five major

airports in the country received updated explosives training and certification in 2006. The DNCD is purchasing canines for training in drug detection. Plans are underway to establish a canine training location utilizing an Army base that is currently in use. The DNCD continued to upgrade its equipment, train technicians, and develop new software in furtherance of a multi-year, USG-supported effort to share data among Dominican law enforcement agencies and to make information available on demand to field officers. The United States Coast Guard executed two joint maritime operations with the Dominican Navy that focused on the human smuggling and illicit drug threats from DR to Puerto Rico via maritime routes in the Mona Passage. The maritime operations were named Op IGUANA I and Op IGUANA II and were executed during fall of fiscal year 2006. The operation objectives was to interdict and deter maritime illicit drug, and human smuggling events, invoke the US/DR Ship-rider Maritime agreement, and joint maritime operations (cutters/boats/aircraft) to jointly coordinate and communicate to effectively cover/patrol the maritime threat vectors.

16. Cultivation/Production. There is no known cultivation of coca or opium poppy in the DR. Cannabis is grown on a small scale for local consumption. There is no definitive evidence of in-country manufacture of MDMA.

17. Drug Flow/Transit. In 2006, the DNCD focused interdiction operations on the drug-transit routes in Dominican territorial waters along the northern border and on its land border crossings with Haiti, while attempting to prevent air drops and maritime delivery of illicit narcotics to remote areas. The majority of air tracks in 2006 originated in Venezuela. During the year, drugs were easily accessible for local consumption in most metropolitan areas. In 2006, the Dominican Navy focused efforts on shore patrol operations. Examination of captured smuggling vessels indicated a strong link between illegal migration and drug smuggling. On a typical voyage, several passengers carry backpacks containing one or two kilograms of cocaine. However, most migrants will drop the drugs into the water upon USCG approach, making it difficult to determine the exact amounts kept from entering

the USA.

¶8. Extradition. The U.S.-Dominican Extradition Treaty dates from 1909. Extradition of nationals is not mandated under the treaty, and for many years Dominican legislation barred the extradition of nationals. In 1998, President Fernandez signed legislation permitting such extraditions and subsequent administrations have been responsive to U.S. requests. During 2005, judicial review was added to the procedure for extradition, making extraditions more objective and transparent. In 2006, the U.S. Marshals Service (USMS) continued to receive excellent cooperation from the DNCD Fugitive Surveillance/Apprehension Unit and other relevant Dominican authorities in arresting fugitives and returning them to the United States to face justice. The GODR extradited 26 Dominicans, notable among them Luis de la Rosa Montero, the head of a well-organized international drug trafficking organization responsible for transporting thousands of kilograms of cocaine and heroin into Puerto Rico from the DR and neighboring islands using go-fast boats. GODR also arrested and deported 21 U.S. and third-country national fugitives back to the U.S. for prosecution purposes. Of these 47 cases, 38 were narcotics-related. Post's Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) Office, with the cooperation of a special Dominican police unit arrested four American citizens and one third country national fugitive who were later deported to the US for prosecution. The five were wanted in the US for various felony crimes, including federal drug violations.

¶9. Mutual Legal Assistance. The GODR cooperates with USG agencies, including the DEA, DHS, FBI, Departments of State and Defense and the USMS on counternarcotics and fugitive matters. The DR is not party to the OAS Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty and no bilateral mutual legal assistance treaty is in effect. Direct requests for judicial cooperation continue to be made through letters derogatory, but are always scrupulously honored. The DNCD housed and manned the DEA-sponsored CDI at its facilities in Santo Domingo. Caribbean countries found the CDI's intelligence analysis services useful and are now both frequent contributors and beneficiaries of new information

¶10. Corruption. The GODR does not, as a matter of government policy, encourage or facilitate illicit production or distribution of narcotics, psychotropic drugs, and other controlled substances, nor does it contribute to drug-related

money laundering. Although the GODR has made efforts to reduce the influence of narcotics traffickers in the judicial system -- removing at least 24 judges from office for improperly handing out favorable sentence to known narcotics traffickers -- in practice, Dominican institutions nevertheless remain vulnerable to influence by narcotics traffickers. Aggravating this situation is the fact that endemic corruption and favoritism among the GODR's law enforcement elite lead to frequent changes in office among its command-level officers, retarding any progress made with prior officials. The GODR has neither prosecuted nor convicted any senior government official for engaging in, encouraging, or facilitating the illicit production or distribution of illicit drugs or controlled substances, or for the laundering of proceeds from illegal drug transactions. The GODR has moved forward on implementing the 2003 Career Law for Prosecutors, graduating 100 newly-hired prosecutors from the National School of the Public Ministry and converting another 27 prosecutors from provisional status.

¶11. The Attorney General pursued several anticorruption investigations, at least one of which resulted in the arrest of a senior DNCD official for extortion. A financial disclosure law for senior appointed, civil service and elected officials has been implemented in the Dominican Republic, but lack of auditing controls and applicable sanctions have weakened the effectiveness of this measure. The GODR is a party to the Inter-American Convention Against

Corruption.

¶12. Precursor Chemical Control. The Secretariat of Health is responsible for the control of chemicals entering and departing the Dominican Republic. The CND has prohibited the re-exportation of certain chemicals. The DR does not import or export a significant amount of methamphetamine, pseudoephedrine or ephedrine or any other precursor chemicals utilized in the manufacture of amphetamines or methamphetamines. The DR has never had a seizure of amphetamines or methamphetamines and post only knows of small quantities of ephedrine being delivered to pharmaceutical companies, and these are being investigated by the DNCD.

¶13. Demand Reduction. The DNCD has conducted 155 sporting events and seminars regarding the effects and use of narcotics and drugs. Approximately 300,000 Dominican youths participated in these events. Post believes that overall, the demand for narcotics in the Dominican Republic is increasing in concert with an increase in narcotics transit, simply because narcotics are often used as a method of payment for transit. No official surveys regarding domestic drug use have ever been undertaken due to a lack of resources.

¶14. Agreements and Treaties. The DR is a party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention. In 1984, the USG and the GODR entered into an agreement on international narcotics control cooperation. In May 2003 the Dominican Republic entered into three comprehensive bilateral agreements on Cooperation in Maritime Migration Law Enforcement, Maritime Counter-Drug Operations, and Search and Rescue, granting permanent over-flight provisions in all three agreements for the respective operations. The three agreements secured permanent over-flight provisions. In addition, the Maritime Counter-Drug Agreement broadened the scope of operations. The GODR signed, but has not yet ratified, the Caribbean Regional Maritime Agreement. As mentioned above, the GODR has not yet signed the OAS Mutual Legal Assistant Treaty. The GODR signed the Cooperating Nations Information Exchange System agreement in 2006.

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IV. U.S. Policy Initiatives and Programs  
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¶15. Bilateral Cooperation. During 2006, the USG continued to provide equipment and training to maintain the explosive detection canine units, support the DNCD,s vetted special investigation unit, enhance DNCD computer training, database expansion and systems maintenance support, improve the DNCD,s capability to detect drugs smuggled through airports, provide training and equipment to enhance the GODR,s anti-money laundering capacity.

¶16. The USG assisted the Dominican Navy with its equipment maintenance and training programs and participated in joint counternarcotics and illegal migration operations as noted above. In addition, the Dominican Navy benefited from numerous USCG courses in Maritime Law Enforcement (MLE) and is working towards a self sustaining law enforcement program. The Dominican Navy and Air Force have a direct communications agreement with the USCG regional operations center in San

Juan, Puerto Rico. Dominican Navy vessels have participated in a few maritime drug seizures and joint exercises.

¶17. Post,s FBI office presented a course on Basic Crime Scene Investigation in March 2006. FBI instructors taught 30 National Police Officers and 10 prosecutors about the collection and preservation of crime scene evidence. The 30 police officers that graduated were presented with Crime Scene Kits for use in their investigations.

¶18. The Law Enforcement Development Program implemented by the Narcotics Affairs Section (NAS) to assist in reforming the GODR,s National Police progressed more rapidly in 2006. The Internal Affairs (IA) has been restructured and is operating efficiently. In the last few months, approximately

60 police officers were terminated who tested positive for drug use. IA investigators also completed 20 internal investigations against police personnel which were referred to the Prosecutor General's office. Deaths as result of police involved shootings have declined considerably. A new training curriculum for basic police training was developed and implemented. A community based policing program was initiated in several barrios with preliminary positive results. National Police and Prosecutors continue to receive combined training which promises to further enhance institutional cohesion.

¶19. The USAID criminal justice and transparency program emphasized training for judicial personnel in new criminal procedures and the investigation and prosecution of complex crimes. The result has been faster case processing, decreased pre-trial detention, availability of public defenders and prosecutors 24 hours per day, and positive change in the justice sector,s attitudes toward presumption of innocence of the accused. In 2005, USAID assisted the Public Prosecutor,s office in developing and implementing policies and procedures for evidence preservation and asset seizure and maintenance, given recent policy changes transferring these authorities from judges to prosecutors. In 2006, they continued to strengthen the forensics lab to improve security, handling, and processing of the drugs and arms it receives as evidence.

¶20. The Dominican chapter of the Business Alliance for Secure Commerce (BASC), a voluntary alliance of manufacturers, transport companies, and related private sector entities, expanded its training program and was cited by CBP officials as one of the most effective BASC chapters worldwide. In 2006, the BASC DR chapter expanded to 30 the number of companies who met the strict criteria for certification.

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¶V. The Road Ahead  
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¶21. The immediate goals of post,s narcotics control strategy remain helping to institutionalize judicial reform and good governance. The GODR and USG are working to build coherent counternarcotics programs that can resist the pressures of corruption and can address new challenges presented by innovative narcotics trafficking organizations. The USG and the GODR will continue strengthening drug control cooperation through sharing of information and developing closer working relations among principal agencies. The USG will continue providing training and equipment for the DNCD, focusing its attention on the information technology and intelligence exchange necessary to disrupt narcotics smuggling at Dominican land and sea borders and at airports. The USG will provide further training to prosecutors, investigators, and national police, increasing their professionalism and ensuring that they are prepared to continue to implement the new Criminal Procedure Code. The USG will push to increase operations cooperation between the USCG and the GODR Navy in the coming year. The USG will continue to provide full support for the effect measures established such as in law enforcement training and the work of Internal Affairs Unit to weed out corruption. Through all the cooperative programs between the USG and GODR goals will be achieved.

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